

SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS
CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, relative to the conference report that is before the Senate, this emergency supplemental appropriations bill includes \$95 billion for the Department of Defense, primarily to fund military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. That is approximately \$4 billion more than the President requested for the Department of Defense, including \$2.2 billion above the President's request for health care for our service men and women and their families.

When the military forces are in harm's way, it is our solemn duty to provide the equipment they need and the health care they deserve, and we are meeting that duty with this bill. We also owe it to our troops to give them the best chance to succeed. In the case of Iraq, a majority of the Members of the Congress and a majority of Americans believe a change in course in Iraq will provide the best chance of success. That is at the heart of the debate here in Washington.

There is at least a broad, if not universal, consensus that the war in Iraq will not be won militarily and that a political settlement by the Iraqi leaders is required to end the sectarian violence and defeat the insurgency. General Petraeus made that point in a press conference in Baghdad on March 8 when he said:

Any student of history recognizes that there is no military solution to a problem like Iraq.

Iraq's own Prime Minister Maliki noted 5 months ago that:

The crisis is political, and the ones who can stop the cycle of aggravation and blood-letting of innocents are the [Iraqi] politicians.

The debate, then, is how best to bring about the political settlement that must take place. There are some who say security, particularly in Baghdad, is the key, and if Baghdad can be made secure, the Iraqi politicians will have breathing room to reach the agreements and pass the legislation that will lead to reconciliation.

Others, including this Senator, believe the Iraqis must be pressured to take responsibility for their own future, and the best way to do that is to convince them our military presence is not open-ended.

The emergency supplemental before us is designed to do just that. It forces the Iraqi leaders to take responsibility for their own country by ending the open-ended commitment to provide a U.S. security blanket. Instead, it would require the beginning of a partial reduction of U.S. troops, leaving time for the Iraqis to make the political compromises they promised to make months ago.

The bill calls for a change in mission for our forces in Iraq, from policing a civil war to a limited support mission, so that the Iraqis can finally realize our military presence in Iraq is not open-ended; that the future of their country is in their hands, not ours.

The present course in Iraq is failing. The Iraqis are no closer to political reconciliation today than they were when the surge began. Instead of Prime Minister Maliki's government becoming stronger, it appears it is weaker. Disagreements in the Government have prevented proposals for deBaathification and oil revenue sharing legislation from even being forwarded to the Council of Representatives for consideration.

The committee considering amendments to the Iraqi constitution appears to be as far from completing its work as it has always been. Meanwhile, the Iraqi Assembly is apparently planning to go on a 2-month recess at the end of June. Now, let me repeat that since it is so unbelievable. The Iraqi Council of Representatives is apparently planning to go on a 2-month recess at the end of June.

Incredibly enough, a man named Hasan Suneid, who is a lawmaker and the adviser to Prime Minister Maliki, was quoted in the paper the other day as saying, "Time is irrelevant."

Well, time is plenty relevant to us, to our troops, and to their families. Baghdad is burning while the politicians in Iraq avoid responsibility for their own country's future. Even the detonation of a suicide bomb within the Green Zone killing Iraqi parliamentarians has failed to change the political situation. It appears the Iraqi factions are content to seek vengeance rather than reconciliation.

Senior administration officials, including Secretary Gates, Secretary Rice, and Ambassador Khalilzad have, in fact, wisely used this debate in Congress in an attempt to pressure the Iraqis to achieve political reconciliation.

Secretary Gates said the week before last in Jordan:

The debate in Congress has been helpful in demonstrating to the Iraqis that American patience is limited. The strong feelings expressed in the Congress about the timetable probably has had a positive impact . . . in terms of communicating to the Iraqis that it is not an open-ended commitment.

Secretary Gates told a press conference just last Thursday:

I think one of the ancillary benefits of the debate on the Hill is that the Iraqis have to know that this isn't an open-ended commitment. The President has said that our patience is not unlimited. I don't think we've been very stubborn in communicating these messages to the Iraqis.

That is what Secretary Gates said: "I don't think we've been very stubborn in communicating these messages to the Iraqis" that our patience is not unlimited. Well, we need to change course in Iraq. We need to stubbornly communicate our message to the Iraqis. Voting for this bill will help to send that message.

I yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there

will now be a period for the transaction of morning business with Senators permitted to speak therein.

Under the previous order, all time until 12:45 p.m. will be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

AMERICA COMPETES ACT

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I am glad we are ready to begin again, after we finished up on our bill yesterday.

Finally, we will be prepared to deal with the funding for our troops today. It has taken a very long time but, nevertheless, I am glad the time has arrived.

I just wanted to say that as often is the case, I have had the opportunity to visit with several students from my wife's class at Washington Lee High School. Each year I look forward to her bringing her class here because it is important for young people to understand this is their Government as much as yours and mine. So I am delighted at the number of young people who come here from Wyoming and, in this case, from Virginia.

To learn more about this Government is so important, and these young people are, of course, tomorrow's responsible leaders. I am just delighted to have them here. We talked about the American COMPETES Act. These students and opportunities for them is what it is all about. That is what we have been talking about and thinking about.

The American COMPETES Act has a good purpose and a good role. America must maintain its competitiveness to be able to continue to compete. We need to challenge our young people and encourage them to challenge themselves to be prepared to move into the future and be prepared to take advantage of the opportunities this country provides for all of us.

However, I do not believe the solution to keeping America in the forefront of technology simply lies in throwing money there, without any particular reason to expect results from it.

We have gotten in the position here in the Congress that when we hear of a problem—and there are problems—if we can pass a bill and send some money, then we have accomplished our job. I am sorry, I do not believe that is necessarily the case. I think we have to take a look at where we are on these issues. For instance, how many Federal educational programs are there now? What kind of a job have we done in trying to see how effectively those dollars have been spent and are being spent? So just having more programs and more money is not necessarily the answer.

Certainly, these students and these schools need more money, and they need to have programs, but they really need support from dedicated teachers,